

## **Op Ed Submission from Commissioner Vilaseca on Common Core State Standards**

On August 17, 2010, the Vermont State Board of Education approved the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. The Common Core State Standards initiative is a national effort to have common learning expectations for all students across the country. Vermont is the 31st state to adopt these standards, and it is expected that all remaining states will do so as well in the coming months.

The Common Core State Standards are comparable to the most rigorous international education standards. What this means for Vermont and other states with high standards is that we will not be lowering our standards in this move, but rather more states will now have high expectations comparable to what we already have. We will also be able to truly see how well our students perform compared to their peers nationally.

For the past six years, Vermont – along with Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and most recently Maine – have shared common standards and a common assessment called the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). Our states' standards are considered to be some of the highest in the nation, and we do not take this change lightly.

The NECAP consortium will no longer be viable after 2014, since all states will be using one of two new assessments based on the Common Core. Of the two assessments, Vermont is participating in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), which has approximately 32 states participating. This assessment will expand the use of technology by delivering the assessment to students electronically. Each student will respond to a unique set of items that will provide more information about progress as well as achievement. This move to only two assessments nationally means there will be better comparisons across states, and more collaboration and sharing of resources among all states. In addition, through these common assessments, colleges and universities will be better able to incorporate student results in their admission process, which will make this assessment much more relevant for our high school students.

Vermont has been actively involved in the development and review of these new standards and will be actively involved in the assessment consortium. Because of our experience working in multi-state consortia, Vermont is able to bring perspectives to the discussion that only a handful of states can provide.

The transition from our current standards and NECAP assessment to the implementation of the Common Core in curriculum, instruction and assessment will require a multi-year effort at the local and state level. Professional development will be the single most important aspect of preparation for this change, and will require a statewide initiative and investment to support teachers in this transition.

This initiative comes with some concessions. This transition means Vermont will be changing assessments for the third time in 16 years, making it difficult to look at trends and how improvement to curriculum and instruction is impacting students' test scores. There will be some additional costs for staff development and implementation of new curricula, which will require additional resources at the state and local levels to ensure all of our educators are well prepared to support the Common Core. However, these are minor concessions to make when we look at the long-term benefits of adopting the Common Core.

The State Board's vote to adopt the Common Core State Standards continues to push Vermont's already strong educational system forward. We expect these changes at the state and national level will result in enhanced outcomes and increased aspirations for students beyond high school, and will accurately measure true college and career readiness skills for all Vermont students.

For more information, visit [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_curriculum.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_curriculum.html).

Armando Vilaseca is the Vermont Commissioner of Education.